

Statement of

# **The Honorable John Cornyn**

United States Senator  
Texas  
November 9, 2005

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN CORNYN  
Before the United States Senate Committee on Judiciary  
On Cameras in the Courtroom  
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding today's hearing. As a strong proponent of open government, I am likewise supportive of cameras in the courtroom, and am an original co-sponsor of both S. 829, the Sunshine in the Courtroom Act and S. 1768, the Televising Supreme Court Proceedings Act. I believe that cameras should be allowed in both district and appellate courts -- and furthermore, that the Supreme Court should also televise its proceedings. Both of these bills would permit everyday citizens from across the country observe what goes on in the Judicial System. This will help our constitutions to be better informed, and in turn will better serve our government.

I believe it is important that the people of the United States know what happens in all branches of government. C-Span currently televises the debates on the floors of both branches of Congress. Daily, Executive Branch press conferences are televised. These broadcasts allow the public to see the give-and-take between public officials, which provides the public a better understanding of governmental policies. Opening the courts to this type of comprehensive coverage will certainly better serve our public, and will keep them informed as they perform their citizen duties.

In fact, C-Span currently replays audio tapes of Supreme Court arguments from its archives on Saturday nights. These broadcasts are very interesting and provide an opportunity to hear how the Supreme Court addresses issues they are called on to decide. I was pleased to hear that throughout the month of August, C-Span replayed archived Supreme Court arguments made by John Roberts and has recently begun to replay past arguments made by Judge Samuel Alito. For those who listen to these broadcasts, they undoubtedly come away from them knowing that both individuals are highly qualified and skilled Supreme Court advocates.

Allowing cameras into the courtroom would allow many people to learn more about the government and more about our judicial system. This would increase the confidence of the general public that we have dedicated public servants who serve in our judiciary, and who, on a day-in and day-out basis, conduct themselves in a dignified, distinguished, and professional manner.

I recognize that it is important that any telecast be conducted in an unobtrusive way that does not interfere or disrupt the proceedings or prejudice the rights of the litigants. This is done, with

great success, every day. Court TV and other outlets have refined the process over time such that they blend in with the courtroom surroundings and the trial carries on as if they were not there.

Fundamentally, open government is one of the most basic requirements of any healthy democracy. It allows taxpayers to see where their money is going; it permits the honest exchange of information that ensures government accountability; and it upholds the ideal that government never rules without the consent of the governed.

Our government's default position must be one of openness. Whether it be documents, information, or court proceedings, if it can safely be open and broadcasted to the public, then it indeed should be.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses to day. Thank you Mr. Chairman.